



Netwatch

By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

All connected and up to speed

We CAs are a busy bunch. Statistics show that over the years, we've been working longer and longer hours and often bring work home. More than likely, we're taking home a laptop instead of a briefcase. Which, of course, creates a new set of demands — the need

for a home network that supports the sharing of a single high-speed Internet connection among multiple computers, particularly once you add in a few home PCs for the rest of the family. (While dial-up might be fine for some purposes, you'll rage in silent frustration if you can't access the Internet at the same speed that you do at work.)

Many Canadians — more than one million homes — already have a high-speed Internet connection. Yet

if you aren't among them, you're probably wrestling with the conundrum as to which service to choose: cable or DSL. There isn't an easy answer, because the speed of the services vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

Your best bet is to talk with neighbours who have cable and DSL service and get them to test the speed

using such tools as Bandwidth Meter, Broadband Speed Test or any other such services (see box). Keep in mind that while the reports these sites generate can be interesting, they might not necessarily be accurate because the readings depend on where the service is located, the time of day and many other factors. Hence, have your neighbours do the test a few times, then make your decision.

A high-speed connection is but one part of your technological infrastructure — you'll also need to establish your own home network. Don't hold back by thinking this is an overly complicated task. It isn't, especially with products known as "cable/DSL routers" that link together multiple computers and make the sharing of a single Internet connection easy.

These devices provide two ways to network your home — wired or wireless. The latter will certainly be

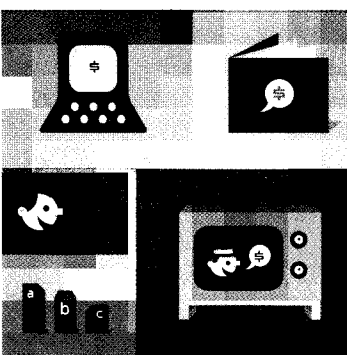
the easiest but more costly method (in that the network cards and hubs are a bit more expensive). Simply go out and buy a wireless network router such as the D-Link AirPlus Enhanced 2.4GHz Wireless Router and a few wireless net-

work cards for your laptops and desktops. (Newer laptops have wireless capability built in.)

Establishing a hardwired network can be a little more complicated, because you need to string ethernet cable through your house, and put proper jacks or plugs on each end of the wire. (Most electricians today do this, or you might find a neighbourhood kid who can. If you are really brave, try it yourself — I bought the wire, strung it to every room in my home, bought a "crimper," and installed the whole darn thing.) Once you have the wires in place, you'll need network cards for your computers (which are available for as little as \$15, at least for desktops; many laptops have this feature built in), as well as a DSL/cable hub such as the 3Com OfficeConnect Remote 812 ADSL Router (for DSL connections).

In either case, with either configuration, you then need to spend a few minutes on the configuration screen for your router, providing details about your Internet connection. Reboot your machines, and voilà, everything should connect to each other and to the Net.

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HOME NETWORK SOLUTIONS

Cnet Bandwidth Meter

webservices.cnet.com/bandwidth

BroadbandReports.com Speed Tests

www.dslreports.com/test/0

Sympatico HSE Test Page fastweb.sympatico.ca/test

Bandwidth Place Speed Test

bandwidthplace.com/speedtest

3Com www.3com.com

D-Link www.dlink.com